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Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001

Revised estimates resulting from resolutions and decisions adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1999

Third report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee has considered the report of the Secretary-General on revised estimates resulting from resolutions and decisions adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1999 (A/54/443). During its consideration of the report, the Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information.

2. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraphs 6, 8 and 12 of the report that estimated additional requirements for the biennium 2000-2001 arising from the resolutions and decisions adopted by the Economic and Social Council amount to $440,300. That provision would represent a charge against the contingency fund and a related additional appropriation of $86,900 under section 11A, Trade and development, and $353,400 under section 22, Human rights, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001. As indicated in paragraph 4 of the report, no additional conference-servicing resources would be required, as provision has been made in the proposed programme budget, not only for meetings already programmed at the time of preparation of the budget, but also for meetings that may be authorized subsequently, provided that the pattern of meetings is consistent with past years.

3. The Advisory Committee notes that the report does not give full-cost estimates of the additional requirements resulting from resolutions and decisions adopted by the Economic and Social Council, that is, it does not indicate the costs of additional activities that would be financed from within the provisions of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001. In that connection, the Committee requested and was provided with additional information on statements, both written and oral, submitted in 1999 to the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies, including the regional commissions, of programme budget implications of draft resolutions and decisions. The Committee requests that future

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reports on the subject contain full-cost estimates, including both conference and non-conference costs, of additional requirements.

4. The Advisory Committee was informed that a statement of programme budget implications (E/1999/L.48) had been issued in connection with draft resolution II contained in the report of the Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods (E/1999/43). The Economic and Social Council has not yet taken action on the report of the Committee. Should the Council approve the draft resolution, an addendum to the report of the Secretary-General on revised estimates resulting from resolutions and decisions of the Council would be issued.

5. Upon request, the Advisory Committee was provided with a list of resolutions and decisions adopted by the Economic and Social Council containing the phrase "within existing resources". In that connection, the Committee recalls paragraphs 66 and 67 of its first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001,[1] in which it noted with concern the growing practice of some intergovernmental bodies of attempting to determine the method of financing of mandates to be approved in the context of substantive resolutions, in contravention of the provisions of General Assembly resolutions 41/213 of 19 December 1986 and 42/211 of 21 December 1987. In its report, the Committee also noted the use of the phrase "within existing resources" in a number of resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly and emphasized the responsibility of the Secretariat to inform the Assembly thoroughly and accurately about whether there were enough resources to implement a new activity.

6. The Advisory Committee was also provided with additional information on the interpretation by the Secretariat of the provisions of General Assembly resolutions 52/220 of 22 December 1997 and 53/214 of 18 December 1998 concerning perennial activities (see annex).

7. The Advisory Committee recommends that, at the present stage, the Fifth Committee take note of the estimate of $440,300, on the understanding that such appropriations as may be necessary will be requested by the Secretary-General in the context of a consolidated statement of programme budget implications and revised estimates to be submitted to the General Assembly.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 7* (A/54/7).

Annex

Additional information on the interpretation by the Secretariat of the provisions of resolutions 52/220 and 53/214 concerning perennial activities, provided by the Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division

I wish to confirm the statement contained in my memorandum of 14 October 1999 to you on the procedure followed for the application of paragraphs 15, 16 and 17 of General Assembly resolution 53/214 of 18 December 1998. That statement is reproduced below for ease of reference:

> "The report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/52/42) on the relationship between the treatment of perennial activities in the programme budget and the use of the contingency fund was issued on 9 March 1998. The related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions is contained in document A/53/7/Add.9 of 8 December 1998. The General Assembly decided to defer consideration of the two reports.
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> "Resources for country special rapporteurs were included in the 1998-1999 budget in accordance with the established and agreed procedure on perennial activities, which was established, in consultation with the Advisory Committee, in the biennium 1986-1987 and subsequently formalized by the General Assembly in its resolution 41/213 of 11 December 1986. According to that procedure, provisions for activities of a perennial nature are included in the proposed budget on the basis of past experience. Further, pursuant to the procedure, the mandates of country rapporteurs are established first by the Commission on Human Rights and subsequently confirmed/endorsed by the Economic and Social Council. One of the main reasons for adopting the procedure was to ensure the implementation of the decisions of the Commission on Human Rights without too much delay and to avoid recourse to multiple individual statements of programme budget implications and to the procedure for unforeseen and extraordinary expenditures.
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> "In its resolutions 52/220 of 22 December 1997 and 53/214, the General Assembly called on the Secretary-General to ensure that no funding was provided to activities that had no specific mandates approved by the Assembly. The Secretariat has not provided funding to such activities. It has provided funding to activities mandated by the Commission on Human Rights and endorsed by the Economic and Social Council, in accordance with the procedure approved by Member States in General Assembly resolution 41/213."

The chronology for the preparation of the programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 in relation to the renewal of the mandates of the country special rapporteurs is as follows:

(a) The budget fascicle of section 22, Human rights, containing resources for the country special rapporteurs, was finalized on 13 May 1997;

(b) The mandates for the special rapporteurs were established or renewed by the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-third session, from 10 March to 18 April 1997;

(c) Those decisions of the Commission were subsequently endorsed by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1997 (July 1997);

(d) The General Assembly took note of the relevant chapters of the report of the Economic and Social Council considered by the Third Committee in its decision 52/429 of 12 December 1997.

The financing of the activities of the country special rapporteurs is not contingent upon the approval of the mandates of those rapporteurs by the General Assembly. Those activities are fully mandated by another major organ other than the General Assembly, namely, by the Economic and Social Council, and as such were never considered to be the subject of paragraphs 74 and 79 of General Assembly resolution 52/220.